



## King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1353/shq.2017.0003](https://doi.org/10.1353/shq.2017.0003)

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Massai, S. (2017). Editing Shakespeare in Parts. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 68(1), 56-79.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/shq.2017.0003>

### **Citing this paper**

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [librarypure@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:librarypure@kcl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Editing Shakespeare in Parts<sup>1</sup>  
Sonia Massai

Twenty-first century editors of Shakespeare have come to understand and appreciate the opportunities and limitations associated with the imperative of editing 'without the author'. Twenty years ago, Paul Werstine could still rightly lament the tyranny of 'an increasingly engorged author-function', which had eaten up an 'army of scribes, the theatrical industry, ... and the government with its censors' and which was still central to the editing of Shakespeare in the wake of the New Bibliography.<sup>2</sup> Most editors now tend to gravitate instead towards 'single-text' editing, which involves editing one or more early forms of a play as discrete textual artifacts in order to foreground the non-authorial agents elided by earlier editorial methods aimed solely at recovering authorial intentions.<sup>3</sup> Single-text editing has been critiqued for encouraging editors to embrace *all* textual features in the early editions of a play text as meaningful,<sup>4</sup> but emergent alternatives to the Gregian 'Rationale of Copy-Text' (1950) are providing single-text editors with the means to discriminate between meaningful difference and error.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I wrote this essay as a tribute to Barbara Mowat, whose scholarly achievements have inspired and guided me since my days as a graduate student and have greatly affected my own understanding of what is at stake when one embarks on the study of Shakespeare and the transmission of his texts. I would also like to thank Margaret Jane Kidnie, Eric Rasmussen and Tiffany Stern for their invaluable feedback on this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Werstine, 'Editing after the End of Editing', in *Shakespeare Studies* 24 (1996), 47-54, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Sonia Massai, 'What's Next in Editing Shakespeare', in Dymphna Callaghan and Suzanne Gossett (eds), *Shakespeare in Our Time: A Shakespeare Association of America Collection* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 68-72, 69-70.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Gabriel Egan, who has argued that 'rather than choosing the best early edition, New Textualists have tended to celebrate the differences between early editions, refusing to discriminate'. 'This tendency,' he continues, 'has spawned modern reprints of unauthoritative early editions.' 'The Presentist Threat to Editions of Shakespeare', in Cary DiPietro and Hugh Grady (eds), *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now: Criticism and Theory in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 38-59, 53-4). Similarly, though more specifically in the context of current thinking about digital editions, Kathryn Sutherland has questioned the desirability of 'single-text' editing: 'For most purposes the fact of textual variance does not lead inevitably to the importance of variance; often it leads to its opposite. Most reading and scholarly purposes require a stable text. It is on notions of stable textual identity, persisting as shared cultural property, that reading communities are built.' 'Being Critical: Paper-based Editing and the Digital Environment', in Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland (eds), *Text Editing, Print and the Digital World* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 13-25, 22.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, John Jowett's proposition that error, as opposed to difference, occurs 'where the text fails to maintain its own standards of consistency', in 'Full

Twenty-first century editors of Shakespeare have also come to understand and appreciate the opportunities and limitations associated with the related imperative of editing 'without the text'. Thirty years ago Jonathan Goldberg was already eloquently arguing that the defining property of the Shakespearean text 'is a multitude of determinations that exceed a criticism bent on controlling the text or assigning it determinate meanings or structures.' 'The historicity of the text', as Goldberg pithily put it, 'means that there is no text itself' and that we therefore 'have no originals, only copies'.<sup>6</sup> Even a facsimile edition, as David Scott Kastan has similarly argued, 'performs, in both printed and electronic modes, its own act of idealization'. In other words, as Kastan continues,

[facsimile] reifies the particulars of a single copy of the text, producing multiple copies of a textual form that would have been unique (as a result of early modern printing house practice in which the binding of corrected and uncorrected sheets makes it unlikely that any two copies of a sixteenth-century book could be identical).<sup>7</sup>

No textual manifestation of an early modern text can therefore be regarded as 'the text' itself. Nor would a compendium of all press variants (re)constitute 'the text' itself, although editorial projects like the *New Variorum Shakespeare*, especially in its developing digital format, can give users a better sense of how distinctive the instabilities inherent to the Shakespearean text actually are.

'Single-text' editing has undoubtedly offered the most effective response to the pressing need to adjust editorial methods to a theoretically and historically informed understanding of early modern dramatic authorship and textual production. However, while allowing fresh and astute thinking in relation to the key categories of 'author' and 'text', 'single-text' editing has overall reinforced the notion that 'the play' is still the main semantic unit through which we can access and understand early modern English drama. And yet both poststructuralist textual scholars and early modern theatre and book historians have started to re-conceptualize 'the play' as a fluid and unstable assembly of interlocking parts. Jerome J. McGann has, for example, challenged textual editors to think of a literary work 'not in terms of its semantic "content" but as a physically shaped construction', whose parts 'divide the text from itself' and connect it to 'other networks and textual universes'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, writing about actors' parts, Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern have observed that

---

Pricks and Great P's: Spellings, Punctuation, Accidentals', in Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (eds), *Shakespeare and Textual Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 317-31, 331.

<sup>6</sup> 'Textual Properties', in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), 213-217, 216.

<sup>7</sup> Kastan, David Scott, 'The Mechanics of Culture: Editing Shakespeare Today', in *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996), 30-7, 35, 35-6.

<sup>8</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001), 195, 206.

[t]he very idea of parts militates against most thinking about English literature, which is still shaped to Romantic-cum-Victorian notions of either a presiding authorial genius (like 'Shakespeare') or an organically whole text ... and draw[s] us closer to the processes of theatrical production – logistical, material, and phenomenological.<sup>9</sup>

Unpacking their understanding of actors' parts, Palfrey and Stern explain that 'a play in performance was in many ways an accumulation, or a meeting, of numerous separate parts'.<sup>10</sup> James Marino has likewise stressed how, while the 'book of the play' licensed by the Master of the Revels and annotated by the book-keeper 'represent[ed] a plan for performance', actors' parts 'were the script put into practice.'<sup>11</sup> Changes to the script then frequently focused on enhancing, reducing, and occasionally restoring parts that had been previously cut, as shown by extant playhouse manuscripts from which actors' parts were transcribed.<sup>12</sup> Part-based revision therefore generated a further assembling and reassembling of parts that defies our understanding of a play as a unitary, organic whole. Even more crucially, Stern has gone on to describe other types of 'parts', which were either spoken, read out or sung on stage, including prologues and epilogues, letters, songs and other types of 'staged papers' or scrolls, as 'temporary visitors' or 'co-habitants' of the play in performance, because they often circulated independently from it.<sup>13</sup>

Editors of Shakespeare (and early modern drama) to date, whether harking back to a Gregian ideal of 'copy-text' or embracing 'single-text' editing, have edited the play as a stable entity effectively sealed off and independent from other plays. How differently might editors re-present Shakespeare (and early modern drama), if they were to acknowledge the primacy of the part over the whole?

---

<sup>9</sup> Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Palfrey and Stern, 6.

<sup>11</sup> James Marino, *Owning William Shakespeare: the King's Men and their Intellectual Property* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 89

<sup>12</sup> The plays in question, which are discussed in details by Paul Werstine in *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 161-76, are: *John A kent*, *Sir Thomas Moore*, *Sr Iohn Van Olden Barnauelt*, *Edmond Ironside*, *The Honest mans Fortune*, *A Looking glasse, for london and England*, *The Lanchinge of the Mary*, *the Lady=mother*, *The waspe*, *The Fleire*, *The Two Merry Milke-Maids*. See, for example, Werstine on *Edmond Ironside*: 'Hand A slices out a pair of speaking roles from *Ironside* by re-assigning just two speeches. The economy of this intervention testifies to the bookkeeper's masterful grasp of the text and care for its larger integrity in shaping it for performance' (161) or Werstine on Hand C in *Sir Thomas Moore*, who 'accords the same treatment to Sir John Munday' (162). Also worth noting here is the fact that changes to the scripts often occur in the middle of speeches, so other actors' part are not affected and would not require any further changes or adjustments.

<sup>13</sup> See also Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 151, 160.

What 'parts' within and beyond 'the play' can lend a fresh insight not only into the 'content' of any given play but also into the interlocking parts that divide the play from itself, while connecting it to other 'textual networks'? This essay first considers the composite and fluid ontology of 'the play' in early modern theatrical and textual cultures. The different types of parts discussed in this essay range from 'within-play(book)' parts (actors' parts, songs, scrolls, letters, prologues and epilogues, dedications and addresses to the reader, etc.) to 'between-play(book)' parts (part-based revision, updating of company plays by different playwrights, reprints, etc.) and 'beyond-play(book)' parts and 'textual networks' of parts (from extracts in commonplace books, ballads, chapbooks, drolls, Continental redactions, etc. to theatrical, print and readerly repertoires within which plays become parts of larger groupings of dramas as interpretative contexts).<sup>14</sup> Finally, this essay establishes what it would mean to edit Shakespeare in parts, that is, not only without 'the author' and without 'the text' as authenticating points of origin, but also without 'the play' as the pervasive guiding principle informing all current scholarly editions of Shakespeare, both in codex and in digital formats.

## §

The word *play* was used in Shakespeare's time as an uncountable noun carrying meanings related to the experience of recreation, enjoyment and holiday (*OED* II, and especially II.13).<sup>15</sup> Even when *play* referred to a theatrical type of recreational activity, it is not always clear when it was used specifically in its modern sense of a 'literary composition in the form of dialogue, intended for performance before an audience' (*OED* III.17), or when the dramatic dialogue within the play started and when it ended. In *Hamlet*, for example, the line 'we'll hear a play tomorrow' (2.2.471) announces a complex theatrical event, which, though brought to an abrupt end by the King's exit at 3.2.227, is ushered in by a prolonged sequence of theatrical set pieces, or parts, that are perceived by the onstage audience as constituting 'the play'.

---

<sup>14</sup> The term 'play(book)' in the three broad types of parts listed here is meant to suggest both a departure from the category of 'the play', which this essay sets out to query, and a reminder of the composite make-up of 'the playbook' in the period, as explained in more detail below.

<sup>15</sup> Besides the Shakespearean usage reported in the *OED* (II.13) – see the Countess in the opening scene in *All's Well That Ends Well*: 'This young gentlewoman [Helena] had a father ... whose skill ..., had it stretched so far, would have made nature immortal, and death should have play for lack of work' (1.1.16-20) – see also, for example, ' ... Pleasure comes in play; / Not that which God by his sweet law permits, / But the vnlawfull, which presumes to say, / I am thy God, not he that in heau'n sits' (A. G., *A Widow's Mite*, 1619, STC 11490, M3v), or 'we serue him [God] as our children serue vs, when they come in to vs from their play, and haue got something of vs they wanted, away they goe without looke or leg to vs' (Paul Baynes, '*A Letter ... Effectively instructing, and earnestly prouoking to true repentance...*', 1617, STC 1645, D4v-D5).

As the courtiers settle in to hear the play in *Hamlet*, hautboys mark the beginning of the dumb show, which prompts Ophelia to ask Hamlet 'What means this, my lord?' (3.2.123).<sup>16</sup> Hamlet's reply is characteristically quibbling and elusive – 'Marry, this miching mallico? It means mischief' – and it leaves Ophelia wondering whether 'this show imports the argument of the play' and whether the player will tell them 'what this show meant' (3.2.124-8). Hamlet puns on the word 'show', challenging Ophelia to acknowledge its sexual undertones: 'Ay, or any show that you will show him. Be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means' (3.2.129-30). Attempting to put an end to Hamlet's bawdy repartee, Ophelia turns her attention, once again, to the players ('I'll mark the play' 3.2.131). The three short lines that follow – 'For us and for our tragedy / Here stooping to your clemency, / We beg your hearing patiently' – prompt Hamlet to complain: 'Is this a prologue or the posy of a ring?' (3.2.132-5). Despite their briefness, these lines cue the Player King and the Player Queen to enter and to start their first exchange, thus getting the dramatic dialogue finally underway.

A passing remark just before the dumb show, when Hamlet refers to himself as 'your only jig-maker' (3.2.112), hints at other forms of entertainment and stage business, or 'parts', which would have taken place before the dramatic dialogue started and after it ended. Ballads were routinely sold and sung outside the playhouse beforehand and a formal jig followed 'the play'. Hamlet's bawdy exchange with Ophelia before the dumb-show can also be regarded as yet another meta-theatrical hint at the clowning enjoyed by early modern audiences who attended the playhouse 'to hear a play'. According to Richard Preiss, 'ludic forms' that fall into the category of 'clowning', including 'themes' that were 'volleyed back and forth' between the clown and the audience, 'defined the day's offerings' at an early modern playhouse: in fact, as Preiss adds, '[f]or many playgoers, ... the play was what interrupted [the day's offerings], ... an afterthought, and the clown, the ringmaster who transcended it, was the main attraction'.<sup>17</sup>

The provocative suggestion that 'the play' was an 'afterthought', a diversion from the clown's 'merriment' as the 'main attraction' of 'the day's offering', seems in fact quite apt, if we try and see the play not only as a fluid assembly of smaller parts but also as a part within a larger theatrical event. The experience of attending an early modern playhouse to 'hear' a play comprised several types of entertainments, or 'parts', that are now mostly lost to us, but whose significance we ignore at our own peril, as Preiss eloquently explains:

we presuppose that *plays* were the dominant commodity of theatre to begin with, that a play inherently possessed a commercial legibility and experiential integrity sufficient to be perceived as, and afterward rendered as, text. We presuppose that what audiences paid to see were, thus, essentially *texts*. ... We presuppose that the texts we have

---

<sup>16</sup> All quotations from Shakespeare's works are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, third edition (New York and London: Norton, 2016), unless otherwise specified.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9.

today reflect what audiences wanted; we presuppose that they reflect – indeed, could ever reflect – what audiences actually got. ... [w]e still conflate [plays] with the textual deposits they left behind, and conflate that residue in turn with the first half of the word “play-house” – as the sum total of what theatres were about, as if such discrete aesthetic objects as “plays” were the base unit of theatrical experience.<sup>18</sup>

*Hamlet* can help us imagine the dramatic dialogue, namely, ‘the play’ as we understand it today, as a part of a larger theatrical event, that is, ‘the play’ as an early modern audience would have experienced it. As one of the most self-consciously meta-theatrical plays in the Shakespearean canon, *Hamlet* includes a ‘play-within-the-play’ that simultaneously develops the plot – in being ‘the thing’ wherein Hamlet will ‘catch the conscience of the King’ (2.2.523-4)– and re-configures the rest of the play as those lost parts that once framed the play. Hamlet’s ‘antic disposition,’ his witty repartees with the king, with the queen, with Polonius, and with his slow-witted friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, can therefore be thought of as a meta-theatrical reminder of the sorts of ‘themes’ and clowning that Shakespeare’s audiences would regard as an integral ‘part’ of ‘hearing a play’.

The rise of print culture, or what William B. Worthen has memorably called the ‘booking of the play’<sup>19</sup> is generally assumed to have gradually eclipsed ‘the play’ both as a larger theatrical event and as a fluid entity made up of interlocking parts. In thinking about ‘how print affected the idea of play,’<sup>20</sup> we tend to imagine that the liveness and fluidity associated with performance are neutralized by its transmission into print (and especially so in the early modern period, when theatrical performance was more tangentially related to ‘the book of the play’ than contemporary theatrical performance is to the prompt script). The ‘booking of the play’ actually pertained to both early modern print *and* theatrical cultures, and, even more crucially, it did not entail a straightforward transition from moveable interlocking theatrical parts to linear, discrete and fixed textual artifacts. The ‘book’ (or parts thereof) was the standard term used to describe both the dramatic manuscripts that theatre impresarios like Philip Henslowe bought from professional and jobbing dramatists and the manuscript copies entered by members of the book trade in the *Stationers’ Register* in order to secure exclusive right to print publication.<sup>21</sup> However, the ‘book’ at the core of

---

<sup>18</sup> Preiss, 5.

<sup>19</sup> William B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 38.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Entries in the *Stationers’ Register* for playbooks published in 1594 show that, while two of them are described by generic terms (comedy and interlude), twelve are referred to as ‘books’ and none are referred to as ‘plays’. See Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640 A.D.* (1875-1894), 5 vols, XX. Similarly, the wording for payments recorded in *Henslowe’s Diary* for William Haughton and John Day’s lost play *Beech’s Tragedy* in November and December 1599 switches between ‘the tragedie of merie’ / ‘The Tragedy of Thomas Merrye’ and ‘the same booke’; another entry in

commercial transactions both within the theatre industry and the book trade at the time was a composite commodity – once again, an assembly of texts or parts, rather than a singular manuscript artifact.

Several dramatic manuscripts preceded the ‘book of the play’ licensed by the Master of the Revels, including the dramatic dialogue, or parts of the dramatic dialogue written by collaborating playwrights, and an outline of the play, the so called ‘plot’ or ‘plot-scenario’, which, in Stern’s words, ‘start[ed] ... everything ... the play [was], and [was] later encroached upon by different stages of playwriting and perfecting’.<sup>22</sup> Even when a playwright or a scribe prepared a fair copy of the play to sell it to a theatre company, the scenic sequences generated by the ‘plot’ continued to constitute units of dramatic meaning (even when unmarked as scenes *per se*), because ‘scenic rather than narrative integrity’ was paramount in the context of a plot-driven playwriting economy.<sup>23</sup> Once the fair copy of the play reached the playhouse, or even before the entire ‘booke’ was delivered to the company, the company scribe would start disassembling the dramatic dialogue by transcribing it into actors’ parts. As Stern reminds us, we should also refrain from simply assuming that the actors’ parts were transcribed from the fair copy that was sold to the company and then licensed by the Master of the Revels. Sometimes parts were copied when the play was still being written, in order to maximize the time actors had to memorize their parts; sometime parts of the play were revised or changed as a result of censorship after the actors had memorized their parts and, as a result, the actors were ‘always in danger of speaking onstage the pre-revision version of the play they ha[d] already committed to memory’.<sup>24</sup>

The ‘book of the play’ that reached the printing house was similarly unlikely to be identical to ‘the book of the play’ licensed by the Master of the Revels and it often seems to have been made up of several other manuscript documents besides the dramatic dialogue. None of the manuscript printers’ copies used to

---

November 1599 records the payment of 10s to Henry Chettle ‘in earneste of a Booke called the orphanes tragedie’. See W. W. Greg (ed.), (1904), *Henslowe’s Diary*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> Stern, *Documents*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 15. See also, James Purkis, *Shakespeare and Manuscript Drama: Canon, Collaboration and Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), where Purkis shows how the bookkeepers who annotated Thomas Heywood’s *The Captives* and a copy of the *The Two Merry Milkmaids* at the Folger Library (1620; STC 4281) marked scenic sequences, sometimes duplicating act breaks (70, 83), thus highlighting them as significant units of dramatic meaning or ‘parts’.

<sup>24</sup> Stern, *Documents*, 237. See also Siobhan Keenan, *Acting Companies and their Plays in Shakespeare’s London* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), where Keenan refers to ‘a comment made by Sir Henry Herbert when he forbade the King’s Men from performing Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed* (1633) until it had been revised. Herbert instructed the troupe’s book-holder to “Purge” the actors’ “parts, as I have the booke”. Elsewhere in relation to his suppression of the same play he noted that the “players ought not to study their parts till I have allowed of the booke” (101).



set early modern playbooks into print has apparently survived,<sup>25</sup> so any attempt to identify the type of manuscripts underlying the earliest printed editions is necessarily conjectural. However, the company's need to retain the 'book of the play' licensed by the Master of the Revels has led textual scholars to believe that the printers' copies would mostly consist of scribal post-performance transcriptions of the dramatic dialogue or pre-performance dramatic manuscripts,<sup>26</sup> all variously annotated and often accompanied by other manuscript documents.<sup>27</sup> The latter seems to have been the case, at least when prologues and epilogues were printed consecutively and either prefaced or appended to the dramatic dialogue,<sup>28</sup> or when songs were either omitted or printed together and relegated to the front or back of the playbook.<sup>29</sup> Equally suggestive is the occasional inclusion in the printed playbook of multiple prologues and epilogues spoken at different venues where the play had been performed,<sup>30</sup> as well as the occasional inclusion of an argument or a list of dramatis personae, which may suggest the fortuitous presence of theatrical arguments and plot-scenarios in the printing house.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See J. K. Moore, *Primary Materials Relating to Copy and Print in English Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1992)

<sup>26</sup> See Werstine's critique of the category of the 'promptbook' as one of the two main types of printer's copy (along with the 'foul papers') posited by Greg and subsequent generations of New Bibliographers as underlying early modern playbooks. For more details, see *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts*, 107-199. Most recently Purkis has argued that even the playbooks used in the playhouse to guide performance may not have been identical to the licensed 'book of the play' (*Shakespeare and Manuscript Drama*, 95). It is therefore possible that some texts marked up for performance were not guarded by the company for their license and may have been more likely than previously thought to find their way to the printing house.

<sup>27</sup> Stern posits that 'while [some separate texts, or parts] would reside with the dialogue in the playhouse, perhaps written into the "book"', others might be 'placed in the loose folder made for playbooks and related material when the stiff backstage plots were bent in two' *Documents*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Examples can be found in Thomas L. Berger and Sonia Massai (eds), *The Paratexts in English Printed Drama to 1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): see the arrangement of prologues and epilogues in John Mason's *The Turk* (1610: STC 17617), 382-3 or in John Marston's *The Malcontent* (STC 17479-81), 285-9.

<sup>29</sup> A well-known example occurs in the first edition of Thomas Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1608: STC 13360); see Berger and Massai, 367-8. Stern devotes a whole chapter to the journey of songs and masques into playbooks in *Documents of Performance*, 120-173.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the first edition of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1633: STC 17412), in Berger and Massai, 726-7.

<sup>31</sup> Stern, *Documents*, 80 and 15, where Stern explains that person-lists were 'a key element' of plot-scenarios.

Print publication generated other print-specific parts that divided the text of the play from itself and connected it to other texts and textual networks. The introduction of marginal inverted commas into printed playbooks was one important practice whereby sententious, pithy, or vivid phrases were singled out for the benefit of early modern readers, who were thus encouraged to copy them in their commonplace books.<sup>32</sup> While marginal inverted commas occasionally feature in dramatic manuscripts (especially in presentation copies gifted to influential patrons and meant primarily to be read),<sup>33</sup> they were more frequently added to the printer's copy by non-authorial annotators of copy, when dramatic manuscripts were prepared for the press.<sup>34</sup> Recent scholars have also established that there was often a direct correlation between what was typographically highlighted as a separate unit or part of the text in a printed playbook and what individual readers transcribed in their commonplace books.<sup>35</sup>

Act divisions are other print-specific parts introduced into some early modern playbooks by the process of dramatic publication.<sup>36</sup> Most Shakespearean and pre-Shakespearean drama was composed for continuous performance. Accordingly, none of the quarto editions of Shakespeare's plays that predate the publication of the Folio in 1623 includes act divisions, the only exception being

---

<sup>32</sup> For lists of printed playbooks containing commonplace markers, see George K. Hunter, 'The Marking of *Sententiae* in Elizabethan Printed Plays, Poems, and Romances', in *The Library*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 6 (1951-2), 171-88, 172-4 and 177-8.

<sup>33</sup> Hunter also supplies a selected list of dramatic manuscripts containing commonplace markers; see Hunter 178-9.

<sup>34</sup> Lesser and Stallybrass, for example, establish the non-authorial origin of commonplace markers in the first quarto of *Hamlet* (1603), attributing them instead to the 'Bodenham/Allot/Ling circle'; for further details, see 'The First Literary *Hamlet* and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays', in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59 (2008), 371-420, 386-7.

<sup>35</sup> See Laura Estill's analysis of the two Shakespearean extracts which William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, copied into one of his notebooks (Bodleian MS Sancroft 53). Estill shows how Sancroft's selection of these two passages was prompted by the typographical distinctiveness accorded to them in his source text, the Third Folio of 1663-4. For more details see *Dramatic Extracts in Seventeenth-Century English Manuscripts* (Lanham: University of Delaware Press, 2015), 171-3. Stern has however expressed reservations about regarding all marginal inverted commas in early modern printed (play)books as 'commonplace markers' because 'the term assumes that these markers were certainly used for commonplaces (rather than, say, for cut passages – though this is the more usual use, in sermons, for instance, of inverted commas in the period)' (Stern, in conversation). What matters in the context of this essay is that, whether for commonplacing or for cutting, these markers divided the text into discrete sections or 'parts'.

<sup>36</sup> Scenes are marked up on backstage 'plots' and often in manuscript plays. For act breaks, and hence act divisions, originating from 'indoor' playhouse practice, see footnote 37 below.

the partial act division included in the first quarto of *Othello* (1622).<sup>37</sup> The Folio however introduced either partial or regular act divisions in 30 out of the 36 plays included in it. The provenance of act divisions in the Folio is still very much open to debate, but the importance of act divisions as crucial units of dramatic meaning is undisputed, both among those who claim that they reflect theatrical practice and by those who believe that they are in fact part and parcel of the editorial effort that went into the elevation of Shakespeare to the status of a modern classic.<sup>38</sup> Even when act divisions are deemed to be fundamentally misleading, they draw attention to the temporal and spatial make-up of the fictive world of the play and of the 'imaginary audition'<sup>39</sup> through which the reader experiences the play. In fact, whether misleading or facilitating, the act divisions found in the First Folio and in most English printed drama from around 1616 constitute an important opportunity to reflect on how and why some Shakespearean plays were divided into a five-act structure and what other temporal units or parts may shed new light into Shakespeare's dramaturgy.

Other parts were routinely prefaced and appended to early modern printed playbooks, including dedicatory epistles, addresses to the reader, commendatory poems, stationers' apologies, appeals or postscripts, and Latin (and occasionally Greek) mottoes.<sup>40</sup> We should also presume that parts originating in the theatre, like prologues and epilogues, would have been annotated and touched up in

---

<sup>37</sup> One could also argue that the printer's ornaments in sheets G-K in the first quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597; STC 22322) divide the text of the play into scenes or sequences. For more details, see, for example, Erne, 112.

<sup>38</sup> Unlike earlier and later scholars, Gary Taylor has argued that, even when featuring in plays predating the King's Men's acquisition of the Blackfriars, which prompted the introduction of act-breaks in keeping with indoor staging practices, Folio act divisions 'were set from late transcripts, or from quartos which had been annotated with reference to a prompt-book' and that they are therefore 'at least presumptively, theatrical in origin'. See 'The Structure of Performance: Act-Intervals in the London Theatres, 1576-1642', in Gary Taylor and John Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped, 1606-1623* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3-50, 44-5. Most scholars still believe (*pace* Taylor) that Folio divisions in Shakespearean plays written and performed before ca. 1610 are the result of post-performance editorial intervention. Among them, see Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett, *Analyzing Shakespeare's Action: Scene versus Sequence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); James E. Hirsch, *The Structure of Shakespearean Scenes* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1981) and 'Act Divisions in the Shakespeare First Folio', *Paper of the Bibliographical Society of America* 96 (2002), 219-56; and Sonia Massai, 'Shakespeare, Text and Paratext', in *Shakespeare Survey* 62 (2009), 1-11, esp. 8-11.

<sup>39</sup> I borrow this phrase from Harry Berger Jr., *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> The finding list appended to Berger and Massai (954-1009) shows when each of these paratextual materials was first included in printed editions of professional plays and their growing popularity during Shakespeare's lifetime.

preparation for the press, as suggested by the title page of Richard Edwards's *Damon and Pithias*, first published in 1571 (STC 7514) and originally performed by the first company of Children of the Chapel in the mid-1560s. After mentioning that this tragicomedy was 'Imprinted, as the same was shewed before the Queenes Maiestie' by a children's company, the title page goes on to reassure prospective readers interested in reviving the play that 'the Prologue ... is [instead] somewhat altered for the proper vse of them that hereafter shall haue occasion to plaie it, either in Priuate, or open Audience' (A1).<sup>41</sup> All paratextual parts generated by print publication are an integral part of early modern playbooks, though they are still often overlooked by critics and by editors alike. However, an increasing number of Shakespeare and early modern scholars have come to recognize how radically they affected the way in which early readers read, collected and interpreted them.<sup>42</sup>

Further assembling and re-assembling of printed playbooks into larger 'textual networks' occurred when early modern readers and collectors, who would buy their plays mostly as small unbound pamphlets in quarto or octavo formats, had them bound into miscellaneous volumes, otherwise known as *Sammelbände*. As Jeffrey Todd Knight has argued, book assembly and book collecting were highly interpretative practices in the period: instead of promoting the values of standardization and fixity, as posited by earlier historians of the book,<sup>43</sup> Knight has shown how 'unsettled conventions of book assembly' meant that 'books in early print culture were relatively open-ended and to a great extent bound (in both senses) by the desires of readers'.<sup>44</sup> If early modern books, far from being 'discrete, self-enclosed units' were in fact 'relatively malleable and experimental' objects, *Sammelbände* were similarly 'not the sealed-off textual artifacts – organized by author, genre, subject heading, and short title – that are found on shelves in most rare-book archives today', but rather 'fluid, adaptable objects, always prone to intervention and change'.<sup>45</sup> Early modern print culture, in other words, encouraged the assemblage of individual playbooks into collected volumes, where the choice of all their parts and the sequence into which they were arranged were not determined by their authors or by those members of the book trade who published them. The choice of texts and the sequence into which they were rearranged in turn affected how they were read and interpreted, in

---

<sup>41</sup> Stern notes that 'some stage directions too were added by 'annotators' for the page. This includes stage directions that are wrong by the dialogue that flanks them – as when the stage direction for the eight kings in *Macbeth* (4.1) says that the last ghost is to look like Banquo, when, in the dialogue that follows, it is the first ghost who is to look like Banquo' (Stern, in conversation).

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (eds), *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> See, primarily, Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Knight, 4.

ways that are comparable to the interpretative contexts generated by the copying of individually selected extracts into commonplace books.<sup>46</sup>

The work of recent theatre and book historians has thus effectively shown how literary, theatrical, and book production and consumption in the period were thoroughly informed by the circulation, assemblage and recycling of different types of 'parts'. It is therefore time to wonder how this paradigmatic shift in scholarship can in turn help us rethink editorial policy, especially in light of the new opportunities offered by digital editing. Digital editions of Shakespeare have so far by and large retained 'the play' as their main organizational category and have mostly aimed at expanding the amount of textual and visual materials that can be fitted into a paper edition. Digital editions have also re-presented the instability of early modern texts with a great deal of technical ingenuity, ranging from pop-up notes to flicking type, but in ways that are not too dissimilar from those deployed in scholarly editions that collate early variant forms in their textual notes or synoptic and parallel editions that offer their readers more direct access to the different forms of multi-text plays. Accordingly, most scholars interested in digital editing agree that current digital editions of literary works 'mainly display what the medium of print could have produced anyway' because we have not as yet fully responded to the 'need to re-conceptualize the nature of the *work* being edited.'<sup>47</sup>

I believe that the 'part', that ubiquitous textual unit that dominated the production and consumption of early modern drama in the playhouse and in the printing house, and that was never quite effaced by the 'booking of the play', can help us re-conceptualize the category of 'the play'. The re-conceptualization of 'the play' through 'the part' is both historically justified by the central role that the 'part' played in early modern theatrical and print cultures and timely, because of the advent of the electronic medium, which also privileges the networking of parts over self-contained and sealed-off units of information. So how would one go about 'editing Shakespeare in parts' and what would one stand to gain from it?

## §

The shift from paper to digital editions of literary works has highlighted the need to re-conceptualize critical editions as critical archives. A Shakespearean archive, as Alan Galey has argued, is not just 'the imagined totality of playbooks, documents, versions, individual variants, commentaries, sources, adaptations,

---

<sup>46</sup> Knight's re-reading of plays that were bound together, including, for example, *Pericles* (1609) and Samuel Daniel's *The Queene's Arcadia* (1606) in Folger STC 22335 (75), is comparable to the methodology used by scholars who have interpreted poems included in manuscript verse miscellanies. See, for example, Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and The Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Paul Eggert, 'The Book, the E-text and the "Work-site"', in *Text Editing, Print and Digital World*, ed by Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland (Farnham, Surrey UK and Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2009), 63-82, 63, 68.

and other preservable records that underwrite the transmission of Shakespeare's texts'; an archive is also the 'interface ... that mediates between the human and the masses of information that exceed human capacity'.<sup>48</sup> Borrowing the notion of 'textual management' from Michael Driscoll, who defines it as 'the strategy of those who seek, conjecture, or sometimes impose order at the level of documents',<sup>49</sup> Galey goes on to explain how 'archiving constitutes a kind of postmodern [textual] performance, with archivists [and editors], like actors, as co-creators of meaning, not just custodians or conduits of it'.<sup>50</sup> Galey's thinking about archiving is in line with what the Committee on Scholarly Editions, set up by the Modern Languages Association, recommends to digital editors, namely that the aim of scholarly editing in the digital age should be 'the creation of an edition as a single perspective on a much-larger text archive'.<sup>51</sup> The notions of 'interface' and of 'a single perspective on a much-larger text archive' can therefore help us imagine a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' as a 'textual space that makes its content tractable to analysis',<sup>52</sup> using the 'part' as its organizing principle.

Preparing a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' would involve some new editorial tasks, including the identification and tagging of all the smaller parts that make up a Shakespearean play and the systematic linking of each of these parts to related parts and larger 'textual networks' beyond the Shakespearean canon. A digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' would therefore present its users not only with a list of plays (and related resources), but with the option to select lists of parts linked to each play. Tagging and linking Shakespeare's plays to all these parts would create a platform of interoperable resources that would in turn allow users to understand Shakespeare both as author of plays and as a poet and playwright who composed his works (sometime collaboratively) by borrowing, imitating, and recycling parts of other texts and whose work circulated as 'parts' as often (if not more often) than it did as 'works'.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Alan Galey, *The Shakespearean Archive: Experiments in New Media from the Renaissance to Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Galey, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Galey, 53.

<sup>51</sup> 'Considering the Scholarly Edition in the Digital Age: A White Paper of the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editions', <https://scholarlyeditions.commons.mla.org/2015/09/02/cse-white-paper/>; last accessed on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Peter Stallybrass and Roger Chartier, 'Reading and Authorship: The Circulation of Shakespeare, 1590-1619', in Andrew Murphy (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 35-56, where, while discussing the printed commonplace books published under the patronage of John Bodenham, these scholars conclude that 'Shakespeare ... emerges as a canonical English poet ... neither through poems nor through his plays but rather through individual "sentences" (of 10 or 20 syllables) extracted from his works and organized under topical headings' (46).

Some of these parts and textual networks are already accessible to internet users as refereed, open-access digital resources. I discuss some of these resources below; for now, suffice it to say that editing 'Shakespeare in Parts' would involve producing (or re-purposing) a digital edition of Shakespeare that would also have to be open-access in order to be thoroughly linked to other refereed, open-access digital resources. Even open-access resources require funding and institutional affiliations, which are likely to make their linking up difficult to achieve. However, the movement towards open-access, even within commercial models of print and digital publishing, suggests that the type of edition envisaged here might become a viable possibility in the not-too-distant future.<sup>54</sup> In the meantime, a few examples of how differently users of a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' would get to approach the Shakespearean canon will, I hope, illustrate some of its potential intellectual benefits.

A digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' would tag all the 'within-play(book)' parts that make up a Shakespearean play. Among them, especially significant are temporal units of dramatic meaning that are not necessarily marked as act and scene divisions, but that are clearly constituted as self-contained temporal sequences. I am particularly interested in opening sequences, or 'incipits', because they foreground the extent to which these parts of the dramatic dialogue have more to do with the kind of theatre Shakespeare was writing for, its conventions, and its audience's expectations, than with the specificity of the fictive world of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>55</sup> The linking of incipits across the

---

<sup>54</sup> Very encouraging in this context is a new partnership, *LEMDO: Linked Early Modern Drama Online*, led by the University of Victoria, the *Internet Shakespeare Editions* and the Folger Shakespeare Library, which aims to "correct the transcriptions of early modern plays from EEBO-TCP and encode them in TEI Simple" and to "share datasets, resources, and text analysis tools between projects, with the goal of achieving federated searching, data crosswalks, and dynamic interoperability between projects".  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UifTs557Ormb1OsG5iG2PXNQzIqN64bYHg5hBtSRbY/edit#>; last accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

<sup>55</sup> This understanding of opening sequences as formulaic incipits in Shakespearean drama is in line with a shift of critical perceptions. See, for example, Robert F. Willson, who, quoting from Arthur Colby Sprague's *Shakespeare and the Audience* (1935), refers to openings as 'keynote scenes' with a 'mode-setting purpose', in *Entering the Maze: Shakespeare's Art of Beginning* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 1, or, more recently, Joel Benabu, who argues that '[a] Shakespearean opening can be best compared, perhaps, with what is clearly defined as an overture in opera, an introduction that hints at themes that are elaborated in subsequent movements', in 'Shakespeare's Technique of Opening: Strands of Action', *Theatre Topics* 23 (2013), 209-18, 211. Recent scholars have however stressed the inherently theatrical, rather than musical or operatic, quality of Shakespeare's openings. Among them, Peter Holland reminds us that '[a]ll of Shakespeare's opening scenes operate, it might be fair to claim, within a framework of audience expectation, in part driven by the opening of the play's narrative but also in part through an awareness of a horizon constructed out of the modalities of his theatre.' In 'Openings', Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Bridget

Shakespearean canon would also encourage a re-assessment of the significance of individual plays within it, and especially of those plays that are traditionally considered as more peripheral to it. A prime example is *King John* (first performed, 1596?; first printed, 1623), which, as A. J. Piesse has quite rightly pointed out, is often studied in isolation from other history plays in the canon because it 'does not fall clearly into any sequence, either in terms of chronology of historical representation or in terms of compositional chronology'.<sup>56</sup> And yet, if considered from the perspective of its opening, and the opening in other Shakespearean history plays, *King John* appears to have set an important precedent for Shakespeare's experiments with openings in later history plays.

The long opening court scene in *King John* as marked in the Folio edition of 1623 includes a shorter opening sequence that ends with the entrance of the Sheriff at line 44. This incipit draws attention to its theatrical qualities as an opening and introduces central themes and concerns that are developed later on in the opening scene and in the rest of the play. The first line spoken by King John – 'Now say, Chatillon, what would France with us?' (my emphasis) – realigns historical time with the present moment of theatrical performance. It also prompts the French ambassador to challenge John's authority by greeting him as 'The borrowed majesty ... of England' (1.1.4). Queen Eleanor's remark – 'A strange beginning' (1.1.5) – functions dramatically as a marker of character: the Queen preempts her son's reply and therefore suggests a peculiar power-relationship between mother and son. However, it also functions as a meta-theatrical reminder of the distorting mirror that theatre holds up to history and of the peculiar spin that is inherent to any re-presentation of the past.

John's language is similarly steeped in imagery that simultaneously constructs character and underscores the fast-paced quality of this opening, including his lines 'Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France, / For ere thou canst report, I will be there' (1.1.24-5). 'Report' is exactly the mode of representation that this opening shuns: the dialogue in the first 43 lines in *King John* is rather aimed at

---

Escolme (eds), *Shakespeare and the Making of Theatre*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 14-31, 21. Equally crucial is the rationale underlying the language sections devised by Barbara Mowat in the Folger Shakespeare editions, where readers are encouraged to focus on the specificity of the language, on unusual turns of phrase, and on the key words used by Shakespeare to build the fictive worlds of his plays within their opening sequences. See, for example, the language section in the Folger Shakespeare edition of *Othello*, where readers are alerted to the fact that the wealthy mercantile republic of early modern Venice is evoked by words like "'togèd consuls', 'the magnifico', ... 'carracks' and 'prizes'", while the opening of Act 2, which relocates the action to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, introduces a whole new group of difficult but evocative words, including "'high wrought floods', ... 'barks' ... 'guttered rocks' and 'congregated sands'". In Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (eds), *Othello*, in *The Folger Shakespeare Editions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), xvi.

<sup>56</sup> A J Piesse, 'King John: Changing Perspectives', in M. Hattaway, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 126-140, 127, 126.



developing the action at breakneck speed. Other lines in the same speech reinforce the formulaic, highly meta-theatrical quality of this opening sequence, for example, when the king urges Chatillon to be 'the trumpet of our wrath' and 'sullen presage of your own decay' (1.1.27-8). These lines anticipate a French defeat, followed by a French retreat, later on in the play, while echoing the 'sharp blasts of the trumpet [that] ... "heralded" the start of a play' in Shakespeare's theatre, as Stern reminds us.<sup>57</sup> Last, but not least, the queen's two asides to the king also fulfill the important function of anticipating the central tension between right and might, between legitimacy and illegitimacy, and between affect and inheritance, which is developed at much greater length when the Sheriff ushers in Robert and Philip Falconbridge and throughout the rest of the play.

Even such a brief account of the incipit in *King John* highlights thematic and structural parallels with the opening sequence in another, much better known and eminently canonical history play, *King Lear* (first performed, 1605-1606; first printed, 1608) which is rarely, if ever, read along side it.<sup>58</sup> Hardly affected by textual variation, the opening sequences in quarto and Folio *King Lear* (Q 1-36; F 1-36) are, like the incipit in *King John*, embedded in longer court scenes, which center, once again, on a tension between right and merit and between affect and inheritance. Both Cordelia and Philip Falconbridge reject their right to inherit their family patrimony in the name of a higher category of values, whether a filial type of love that cannot be measured or expressed by words or a sense of self-worth that resides beyond the legitimate bounds of the patrilineal family. The incipit in *King Lear*, like the incipit in *King John*, pitches right and legitimacy via Arthur in *King John* and Edgar in *King Lear* against might and illegitimacy, signified by King John's 'strong' but questionable 'possession' of the English throne (1.1.40) and by the 'proper' looks Edmund inherited from his improper mother (1.1.17).

These two incipits are also alike in pace and register: the opening sequence in *King John*, which concludes with the entrance of the Sheriff is just under 400 words long and fills just over one column in the opening page of the Folio edition; the opening sequence in *King Lear*, which is brought to an abrupt end by Gloucester's announcement that 'The King is coming' (1.1.31), is only just under 300 words long and fills just under one column in the Folio. Both sequences also stress the urgent and pressing immediacy of theatrical time, the key temporal marker being, once again, 'now':

Kent:                    I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany

---

<sup>57</sup> 'Before the Beginning; after the End: when did Plays start and stop?' in Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (eds), *Shakespeare and Textual Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 358-74, 359.

<sup>58</sup> Most recently, though in passing, Beatrice Groves compares the ending in *King John* with the two versions of the ending in *King Lear* as preserved in the quarto and in the folio versions of the play. For further details, see 'The Siege of Jerusalem and Subversive Rhetoric in *King John*', in David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 96-110, 98.

than Cornwall.  
Gloucester: It did always seem so to us. But *now*, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most...' (1.1.1-5; my emphasis).

These similarities are intriguing and suggestive, but they have attracted little, if any, critical attention. While some scholars have considered how Shakespeare constructed the openings in the English history plays that fall neatly into sequences, otherwise known as tetralogies,<sup>59</sup> no attempt has been made to establish whether and how Shakespeare modified conventions, pace and structure to open plays drawn from ancient British history. The tagging of incipits in a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' would instead allow users to compare and contrast them across the canon and would potentially foreground similarities not only between *King John* and *King Lear* but also with *Cymbeline*, another play that draws from the matter of ancient Britain or from a remoter past than the events covered by the two tetralogies.

Like the incipits in *King John* and *King Lear*, the incipit in *Cymbeline* is self-consciously meta-theatrical and fast-paced and allows two unnamed gentlemen to discuss court matters before the opening court scene *per se* gets under way. As in *King John* and in *King Lear*, the incipit in *Cymbeline* is concerned with the type of legitimacy warranted by birthrights or by merit, and with the conflict between affect and inheritance. Posthumous is worthy and beloved by the king, but he is also marked by, and literally named after, his preposterous and untimely birth, while Cloten, the king's step-son who aims at the throne by seeking Imogen's hand, is '[t]oo bad for bad report' (1.1.17). Noteworthy is the reference, once again, to 'report', and to 'bad report' more specifically, as a reminder of what constitutes a well constructed versus a static and expository opening. Also, as in the earlier history plays, we are invited to wonder at the matter of the play that is just beginning – 'But what's the matter?' (1.1.3) – and we are encouraged to determine whether what we are being offered is 'worth [our] hearing' (1.1.57).

Shakespeare clearly adapted the conventions and dramaturgical strategies at his disposal to the different types of history plays that he wrote at different stages in his career. A digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' would aim to tag incipits, as well as all the other constituent 'parts' within 'the play' discussed above, in order to allow users to compare and contrast plays that would not normally be considered as significantly linked to each other. This type of edition would therefore help us historicize the mindset responsible for making *King John* (and other plays perceived as peripheral to the canon) seem like a glitch, a baffling oddity in the midst of other works that more readily fall into familiar categories, starting with the ones introduced by the Folio, which groups *King John* with the histories and *King Lear* and, rather surprisingly, *Cymbeline* with the tragedies. It is through parts like the incipits in *King John*, *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* that we can reconsider the traditional view according to which the earliest of these three

---

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Joseph Candido, "'Once More Into the Play": Beginning the Sequel in Sh's History Plays', in Robert F. Willson, Jr. (ed.), *Entering the Maze: Shakespeare's Art of Beginning* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 55-74.

history plays does not belong with the other histories in Shakespeare's canon or in the canon more generally.

Continuities between *King John* and *King Lear* are also highlighted by 'beyond-play(book)' parts. Particularly interesting in this context are extracts in commonplace books. As Laura Estill has observed, the extracts copied by early modern commonplacing readers do not amount to 'a coherent representation of the plot' of the play and 'thematic differences between plays [may seem] inconsequential'. However, *DEx: A Database of Dramatic Extracts*, a digital resource being set up by Estill and Beatrice Montedoro,<sup>60</sup> if linked up to a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts', would allow users to establish what parts of any given play were copied by any given reader and to infer what underlying interest or concern, if any, may have led to their being copied out.

With regard to *King John* and *King Lear* users of this type of edition would be able to establish that at least one early modern reader, William Sancroft, Bishop of Canterbury, extracted passages from both plays, that most of these passages were spoken by the 'Bastard' (Philip Falconbridge) and by Kent, and that the longest passage from each play reflects these two characters' intolerance for any form of fawning opportunism. The following is the longest extract copied by Sancroft from *King John*:

whose armour Conscience buckled on, Whom zeal and charity  
brought to the field, as Gods own soldier – With that same purpose-  
changer, that sly devil That Broker, that still breaks the pate of faith,  
That daily break-vow, he that wins of all, Of kings, of beggars, old  
men, young men, maids Who, having no external thing to lose, But  
the word maid, cheats the poor maid of that That smooth-faced  
gentleman, tickling Commodity. Commodity, the bias of the world  
The world, who of itself is peised well, Made to run even upon even  
ground, Till this advantage, this vile-drawing bias, This sway of  
motion, this Commodity, Makes it take head from all indifferency,  
From all direction, purpose, course, intent. And this same bias, this  
Commodity, This bawd, this broker, this all-changing word, Clapped  
on the outward eye of fickle France, Hath drawn him from his own  
determined aid (TLN885-905; p. 82)<sup>61</sup>

As well as for its length, this passage is also noteworthy because Sancroft, who selected extracts mostly in the order in which they appear in the source-play, went back to transcribe it, having already copied the previous extract from *King John* TLN1189-1192.

---

<sup>60</sup> <https://dex.citd.tamu.edu/index.html> In *Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 'a not-for-profit partnership dedicated to the advancement of learning in the study and teaching of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (400-1700) through the development and distribution of online resources' (<http://www.itergateway.org>)

<sup>61</sup> As reproduced at [https://dex.citd.tamu.edu/browse-play.html#plays/Shakes\\_KingJohn](https://dex.citd.tamu.edu/browse-play.html#plays/Shakes_KingJohn); last accessed on 26.09.16

The longest extract Sancroft copied from *King Lear* reveals a similar preoccupation with the plight of fickle vow-breakers, who act in their own interest, thus confirming the power of 'tickling Commodity ... the bias of the world' over mankind:

Such smiling Rogues as these  
Like Rats oft bite the holy cords a-twain, which are t'intrince t'unloose,  
smooth every Passion That in the  
Natures of their Lords rebel; being oil to Fire, Snow  
to the colder moods. Revenge, affirm, & turn their Halcyon - beaks with  
every gall and vary of their masters, knowing naught, like dogs but  
following. (TLN1146-1153; p. 95)<sup>62</sup>

The context in which these extracts are originally spoken, or their relevance to Sancroft's circumstances, while interesting in their own right, are less relevant to the aims and purpose of a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' than the fact that they clearly link two plays, otherwise rarely read together, by means of two shorter parts embedded in the dramatic dialogue. Linking a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' to a database like *DEx* would therefore allow users to revisit their understanding of what plays naturally belong to established generic categories.

'Parts' that are larger than 'the play' can best be understood as 'repertory', a category that has effectively re-directed critical attention away from exclusively author-based canons to the theatrical and print outputs of the principal theatre companies and publishers of printed playbooks in the period. Still focusing on *King John*, it is possible to imagine how a digital edition that links this plays with the other plays to which it was connected via theatrical, print, and readerly repertoires can, once again, give users a different point of access into it and, as a result, a chance to re-evaluate its position within the Shakespearean canon.

Before *King John* was included in the Folio of 1623, the 1611 and the 1622 quarto editions of an earlier King John play, *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (1591; STC 14644), were attributed to Shakespeare on their title pages. As James Marino has pointed out, this Shakespearean attribution shows that 'not everyone viewed the old Queen's Men's play and the later King's Men's play as distinct'. This understanding of 'the play' as a composite commodity that comprised the work of different playwrights is perfectly in keeping with the fact that plays in the period belonged to companies and only after that to stationers, once companies (and occasionally playwrights) had sold their manuscripts to them. Besides, as Marino goes on to argue, '[i]n a business environment where revision and expansion of older plays was routine ... and where competitors were always free to create a newer, fresher version of a historical drama in one's repertory, revising one's own plays was a commercial necessity'.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> As reproduced at [https://dex.citd.tamu.edu/browse-play.html#plays/Shakes\\_Lear](https://dex.citd.tamu.edu/browse-play.html#plays/Shakes_Lear); last accessed on 26.09.16

<sup>63</sup> Marino, 33, 34.

The advantage of regarding *King John* as a theatrical property that was adapted as it moved from the repertory of one company to another is that we can start to detect patterns of revision in it that have less to do with the fictive world of two assumedly separate plays and more to do with the different conditions of theatrical production and reception that pertained to different theatre companies, the type of venue to which they had access and the type of audience for which they catered. By linking with new digital resources that focus on theatrical repertory, like the *Queen's Men Editions* website (QME), general edited by Helen Ostovich,<sup>64</sup> a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' could encourage users to consider not only similarities between the theatrical incipits in *King John*, *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*, but also the different dramaturgical logic that informs the theatrical incipits in *Troublesome Reign* and *King John*. Directing attention to the earlier play that Shakespeare updated for his company would show that its main function is expository, with characters explaining why Arthur can challenge King John's claim to the English throne. Also interesting is King John's request that Chatillon should not leave the court 'in hast', so that he can have time to prepare for his campaign in France, aimed at 'forteff[ying] such townes as we possesse' (A4). When Shakespeare updated the play for his company, he must have spotted an opportunity for reversing John's request, so that, as explained above, both the pace of the new opening and John's character are now more decisive, dynamic and action-driven.

A contrastive analysis of print repertories could lend similarly helpful insights. More specifically, *King John* and *King Lear* would once more seem more alike as Shakespearean history plays, if they were included in a digital edition linked to resources that gathered bibliographical information about the printing and publication of early modern playbooks and of early modern books more generally. DEEP, the *Database of Early English Plays* set up by Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser and supported by the University of Pennsylvania,<sup>65</sup> is one such resource. If linked to a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts', it could, for example, help users establish the print popularity of these two plays at a glance. A basic search by play title would show that a *King John* play, namely, *Troublesome Reign*, was first printed in 1591 and then reprinted in the 1611 and 1622 editions that attribute it to Shakespeare. This piece of information alone would give users a good indication of its popularity not only on the stage but also on the page. The number of pre-Folio editions of *Troublesome Reign* is also precisely comparable to the fortunes of *King Lear* in print, if one adds the older Queen's Men play, *The Chronicle History of King Leir* (1605) to the two quarto editions of the Shakespearean version printed in 1608 and '1619'.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> <http://qme.internetshakespeare.uvic.ca>; last accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016

<sup>65</sup> <http://deep.sas.upenn.edu>; last accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016

<sup>66</sup> The '1619' quarto of *King Lear* was in fact printed by William Jaggard for Thomas Pavier in 1619 and is therefore part of the group of plays generally referred to as 'the Pavier Quartos'. Recent scholars have posited a greater role in this enterprise for William Jaggard, and his son Isaac – see, for example, Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118 – and Peter Stallybrass and Zachary Lesser have proposed to call

A further search by stationer on *DEEP* would also provide a profile of the stationers who published the two *King John* and the two *King Leir/Lear* plays, by showing what other plays they also published. Other digital resources, including, first and foremost, the *English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC)*, which is made available as an open-access resource by major institutions, like the British Library,<sup>67</sup> would show the extent to which these stationers invested in dramatic publication, as opposed to other type of books, and the overall size of their output, or 'repertory'. A quick glance at the profiles of the stationers who published the three pre-1623 editions of *King John* – Sampson Clarke, John Helme, Thomas Dewe and – shows that they were small-scale booksellers, who had bookshops in which they mostly sold books printed and published by other stationers, while the publishers of Shakespeare's *King Lear* – Nathaniel Butter and Thomas Pavier – were privileged and well-established members of lucrative monopolies within the book trade (Butter served as Treasurer of the English Stock and Pavier was a member of the group of stationers that shared the right to publish ballads). The more prestigious profiles of the stationers who published Shakespeare's *King Lear* play suggests that there might have been a slightly different dynamic at work within theatre repertories, where, as explained above, *Troublesome Reign* and *King John*, or *King Leir* and *King Lear*, may not have been seen as 'distinct' entities, and print repertories, which begin to show a sensitivity to the literary clout attached to Shakespeare's patronym.<sup>68</sup>

Early modern booksellers' play lists and private library catalogues are the third and last type of early modern 'repertory', or larger-than-the-play 'parts', which I consider because they offer an interesting context that makes a play like *King John* seem less disconnected from a canonical play like *King Lear*, and from the canon more generally. The recent theorization of publishing, retailing and collecting of early modern playbooks as interpretative practices by scholars such as Lesser and Knight<sup>69</sup> offer a rationale for linking a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' to open-access online resources that have digitized these lists and catalogues, because they can give us important clues as to how early

---

them the 'Jaggard Quartos' in 'Shakespeare between Pamphlet and Book: 1608-1619', in Kidnie and Massai (eds), *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, 105-133, 130-133.

<sup>67</sup> [http://estc.bl.uk/F/?func=file&file\\_name=login-bl-estc](http://estc.bl.uk/F/?func=file&file_name=login-bl-estc); last accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016

<sup>68</sup> The Shakespearean attributions on the title pages of the second and the third quarto of *Troublesome Reign* are in keeping with other apocryphal attributions in the early seventeenth century, which, as Lukas Erne has established, attest to the rising popularity in print of Shakespeare during his own lifetime. See 'Shakespeare, Publication and Authorial Misattribution', in *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 56-89.

<sup>69</sup> Beside Knight's *Bound to Read*, see also Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Dramatic Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Marta Straznicky (ed.), *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).



modern stationers and readers may have read two plays like *King John* and *King Lear*. One such list of playbooks, belonging to courtier and poet, Sir John Harington (1560-1612), is available on the *Lost Plays Database (LPD)*, curated by Roslyn L. Knutson, David McInnis, and Matthew Steggle.<sup>70</sup> This list, which was first transcribed by Frederick James Furnivall in 1890, and then reprinted by Greg in his *Bibliography of English Drama in Print to the Restoration*,<sup>71</sup> falls into two sections, the first one detailing playbooks he owes that are still in the process of being bound and the second one listing the content of eleven volumes of playbooks in his extensive private library. The playbooks in each volume do not seem to have been arranged by publication date or by author, although sporadic attributions are added after the titles of some of the playbooks included in volumes eight, ten and eleven. The arrangement of playbooks into some volumes seems instead to have been determined by the theme or character type that Harington must have found to be central to the fictive world of the plays included in them.

The eleven playbooks included in the eighth volume would be of particular interest to users of a digital editions of 'Shakespeare in Parts', because they include Shakespeare's *King Lear* (the title is followed by the initials 'W. Sh') and yet another 'King John' play, namely, *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon*, in a group of dramas that seem primarily concerned with the character of the virtuous, enduring wife or daughter, who heroically withstands sexual advances or violent abuse.<sup>72</sup> Harington's inclusion of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Downfall of Robert* in the same dramatic collection thus suggests that at least one early modern reader grouped plays about the reigns of King Lear and King John together, selecting the virtuous, enduring heroines in these two plays, Cordelia and Marion, as his main source of interest. The binding together of *King Lear* and *Downfall of Robert* should give us pause and make us wonder whether Constance in *King John* may have drawn a similarly sympathetic readerly response in Shakespeare's time. Showing, once again, a slightly different dynamic at work in a readerly repertory is the inclusion of *King Lear* in a different volume, which seems to gather plays mostly about the impact of generational conflict in the transmission of family patrimony or royal power.<sup>73</sup> If *King Lear* and *King Lear* had

---

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.lostplays.org/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](https://www.lostplays.org/index.php?title=Main_Page); last accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016

<sup>71</sup> Harington's list is also mentioned in passing in Alan H. Nelson, 'Shakespeare and the Bibliophiles: from the earliest years to 1616', in Robyn Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (eds), *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading* (New Castle, DE and London: Oak Knoll and British Library, 2005), 49-73.

<sup>72</sup> Among them, the most representative examples are: Campaspe in the homonymous play by John Lily; the merry wives in Shakespeare's comedy; the Countess of Salisbury in the partly Shakespearean *Edward III*; Cornelia in Thomas Kyd's homonymous tragedy; the character of the wife in the possibly Shakespearean *Yorkshire Tragedy*; Amoret in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, and, of course, Grissel in *Patient Grissel*.

<sup>73</sup> The first half of the volume includes plays which focus on the transmission of family patrimony through marriage, e.g. *The Merchant of Venice*, *The London Prodigal*, *Everyman in His Humour*, *Eastward Hoe*, and *Monsieur d'Olive*, while the

belonged to the same company and were clearly not regarded as completely 'distinct' as late as 1655, when Jane Bell, who owned the right to publish *King Lear*, was allowed to publish the third quarto edition of *King Lear*, it is however clear that these two plays belonged to different groupings or dramatic canons as interpretatively constructed by Harington for his library.

The model for a digital edition of 'Shakespeare in Parts' discussed in this essay, by allowing users to connect 'each document (or part of a document) ... to every other document (or document part) in any way one chooses to define a connection,' would put into practice McGann's ideal of 'hyper-editing', which could only be envisaged as a desideratum in the late 1990s. While it may still be difficult to overcome not only firewalls imposed by commercial publishing but also restrictions determined by allocation of public funding or by the management of research outputs within academic institutions, it is now at the very least possible to imagine what 'parts' besides 'the play' could be most profitably connected with what other 'parts' within and beyond it. It is to be hoped that the digital editing of 'Shakespeare in Parts' is very much a case of 'when, not if'.

---

second half includes most plays which focus on the transmission of royal power, including 1 and 2 *Henry IV*, *Richard III*, *King Lear*, *Lochrine*, *Hamlet*, and *Sejanus*, with *The Trial of Chivalry* exceptionally falling into the first half.